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Taelspin for Saturday, January 26, 2008

January 26, 2008 in [Taelspin](#) by [The China Beat](#) | [No comments](#)

Following up on Susan's excellent [post](#) (the first in a series) about preparations for this summer's Olympics, this Saturday edition of [The Taelspin](#) leads off with reports that members of Team USA have been issued specially designed anti-pollution masks to wear in Beijing. Tim Johnson, the Beijing bureau chief for McClatchy Newspapers, and author of the blog [China Rises: Notes from the Middle Kingdom](#), gives his take on the situation.

As anyone who has been to Beijing knows, there has been an almost obsessive focus on public hygiene in getting the city ready for the games. I could go on at length here about regulation of bodily functions, hygiene, and ideas of modernity and progress, but [John Fitzgerald](#) and [Ruth Rogaski](#) have already done that far better than I ever could. For those wishing a—slightly—less academic take on the subject, check out [Danwei](#) guest author Eric Mu's humorous essay "[Beijing WC, Illustrated](#)."

Also on Danwei this week, Joel Martinson translates an article first published in the *China Youth Daily* on the new telenovela *Journey to the Northeast* (闯关东). The story, which begins in the final years of the Qing Dynasty and ends with the Mukden Incident of 1931, centers on Zhu Kaishan, a poor farmer who migrates from Shandong to Manchuria where he finds success, owns land, and hires others to work the land for him. The twist? Zhu is a sympathetic character and is not portrayed as the stock 'evil landlord' figure of so many other historical dramas. Chinese blogger Ten Years Chopping Timber wonders at the contradiction, and Joel provides the [excellent translation](#).

The China Blogosphere mourned this week with news that Xinhua mole and language polisher [Chris O'Brien](#) is leaving the news agency. Chris' weekly dispatches from inside the Chinese spin machine were a must-read for anyone interested in Chinese politics or the media. Hopefully, Chris will keep blogging, but his glimpses behind the Xinhua screen will be sorely missed. *Daily Telegraph* China Correspondent Richard Spencer [gives his thoughts](#) on Chris, other media moles, and the Beijing blogging scene.

Finally, David Bandurski of the [China Media Project](#) dishes the dirt on Guangdong Province's 'twin meetings' (People's Congress and People's Consultative Committee) last week. It goes to show that even the best scripted and choreographed of provincial political events can go [pear-shaped](#) when you least expect it.